

369. Extreme situations

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

You are the dealer, with both sides vulnerable. What would you do with:

♠ Q10976432
♥ --
♦ KQ1085
♣ --

You have a 3-loser hand, which prima facie is too good for a pre-empt, but on the other hand you have only 7 HCP. Your high-card strength and defensive potential is too little for a 1♠ opening. Few would quarrel with a 4♣ opening.

That was the easy part. The auction then becomes exciting:

West	North	East	South
4♣	4NT ⁽¹⁾	Dble	5♣
5♦ ⁽²⁾	6♣	6♦	6♣
Pass	7♣	Pass	Pass
?			

(1) Takeout with a two-suiter

(2) A pre-emptive opener should not bid twice, but with this extreme pattern, you can understand West's 5♦.

What would you do now with the West hand?

Since partner's double of 4NT was looking for penalties, partner clearly has a good hand and partner's pass of 7♣ should be taken as forcing. Partner is offering you the choice between bidding on to 7♦ or doubling the opponents for penalties. Since you have no prospect of a defensive trick against 7♣, it should not be too hard to bid 7♦.

This was the full deal, which arose in a teams' match on BBO:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ --	
	♥ AK9543	
	♦ 4	
	♣ AQ10742	
West		East
♠ Q10976432		♠ AK
♥ --		♥ Q1072
♦ KQ1085		♦ A9632
♣ --		♣ 83
	South	
	♠ J85	
	♥ J86	
	♦ J7	
	♣ KJ965	

As you can see, 7♦ played by West is unbeatable with a combined total of 20 HCP. Shape beats points again. It would be nice to report that 7♦ was what happened, but alas, no. I have no idea what South's 6♣ meant, but when North bid 7♣, East doubled. That ended any possibility of West bidding 7♦.

What do you think of East's double? There was no certainty that 7♣ could be defeated. Suppose you swap North's ♦4 for South's ♥6. Now North-South have no diamond loser, no heart loser and 7♣ makes. Clearly West has an extreme hand for bidding 5♦ despite East's double of 4NT. Maybe North could be 0-7-0-6.

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ --	
	♥ AK9543	
	♦ 4	
	♣ AQ10742	
West		East
♠ Q10976432		♠ AK
♥ --		♥ Q1072
♦ KQ1085		♦ A9632
♣ --		♣ 83
	South	
	♠ J85	
	♥ J86	
	♦ J7	
	♣ KJ965	

In any event, 7♣ doubled went two down. North lost a diamond and a heart, East-West +500. At the other table, East-West bid to 6♠ and that was doubled. West had no trouble making an overtrick for +1860 and +16 Imps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		1♥ ⁽¹⁾	1♠
2♥	3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	?

(1) Playing 5-card majors
(2) Strength raise to 3♠

What would you do as South with:

♠ KQJ1087
♥ 4
♦ AJ74
♣ J5

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

What's blonde and dead in a closet? The Hide-and-Seek Champion of 1991.